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V.—A PARALLEL BETWEEN THE MIDDLE ENGLISH POEM *PATIENCE* AND AN EARLY LATIN POEM ATTRIBUTED TO TERTULLIAN.

The Middle English poem *Patience*, it will be remembered, is in the main a paraphrase of the book of Jonah. In the main also, the medieval writer has followed the biblical narrative, as he has in *Clannesse* when narrating the fall of the angels, the flood, the destruction of Sodom, and the capture of Babylon. But just as in these latter stories the English poet has taken considerable freedom with the biblical account, both in vividness at the expense of a literal rendering and in the use of medieval scripture interpretation, so in recounting the life of Jonah there are passages which have no close connection with the book of the prophet. The most remarkable of these is the extension of two sentences in the book of Jonah into some thirty-nine lines, describing vividly and picturesquely the storm at sea which overtook Jonah and his companions. Of this striking extension, and of certain additions which also occur in it, no source has ever been pointed out so far as I am aware. Nor has attention been called to a close parallelism between this portion of *Patience*, and a similar extension of the same story in the poem *De Jona et Nineve*,¹ formerly attributed to Tertullian.

The likeness between the two poems may be traced in general and in particular as follows. *Patience* consists of 531 lines, of which, after an introduction of 60 lines, a paraphrase of Chapter I of the book of Jonah occupies lines 61 to 302. The remaining 228 lines of the poem relate the story of the remaining chapters of Jonah. The Latin poem, a fragment of 103 hexameter lines, is based on Chapter I of

¹The poem may be found in *Collectio Pisaurensis Poetarum Latinorum*, v, 15, and in Migne, *Patrologiæ*, II, 1107–1114. A translation occurs in the *Ante-Nicene Christian Library*, xviii, 278.

the scripture story. The remarkable resemblance between the two poems is largely in the account of the storm, based on Chapter I, verse 4 and part of 5. These two sentences as stated above are expanded to 27 lines in the Latin poem, or from line 28 to 55, and to 39 lines in *Patience*, that is from line 129 to 168. Beyond this marked resemblance in the two poems there are some other points of similarity, which help to establish in most particulars the parallel suggested.

It is only when we trace the likeness in particular, however, that the significance of the parallelism fully appears. Yet in tracing more minute resemblances between two passages, there is naturally great danger in overestimating general agreement, in this case, for example, points that might occur in any poetical description of a storm. Even such points are important, however, when they are numerous and occur in the same order. It is for this latter reason therefore, that some particulars will be mentioned, which taken out of their connection would not be noteworthy. It should be said also that the poet of *Patience*, as every reader knows, needed no model in describing the sea. Of this the admirable description of the ark tossed upon the waves (*Clannesse*, 413-424), and the setting sail from Joppa (*Patience*, 101-108) are conclusive proof. Notwithstanding, the number of minute resemblances, as well as some for which mere coincidence is not a plausible explanation, indicate conclusively, it seems to me, that the poet of *Patience* had in mind the medieval Latin poem and that it suggested to him certain extensions of the scripture story.

In noting the points of resemblance, we may for convenience call *Patience* A. and the pseudo-Tertullian poem B. The scripture sentences which suggested the storm are as follows in the St. James version: "But the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken. Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his God, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea to lighten it of them." The description in both poems begins with a similar reference to

the clouds and the lightning (A. l. 139, B. l. 28); to the darkening of the water in the storm (A. 141, B. 32), and to the meeting of sea and sky (A. 145, B. 33). Next follows in the same relative position in both poems a significant reference to Jonah's plight (A. 147, B. 36), after which are related the reeling of the ship under the beating of the waves (A. 147, B. 38); the breaking of the rigging and the loss of the mast (A. 148-150, B. 38-41); the cry of the sailors in their peril (A. 152, B. 42), and the bailing of the ship (A. 154-155, B. 46). Within the same few lines, although not in exactly the same order, occurs a reference to the struggle for life itself (A. 156, B. 43). But for the order of this line in *Patience*, the casting out of the cargo (A. 157-159, B. 48) would immediately follow the bailing of the ship in both poems. The reason for the overthrow of the cargo is also somewhat similarly stated in both poems (A. 160, B. 48), though slightly differing from the Bible account in both. Then comes the call of the sailors on their gods (A. 164, B. 50). The point of importance in this is that in both poems the call on the gods follows, while in the scripture it precedes, the casting overboard of the cargo.

While the parallel between the poems is more exact in respect to the description of the storm, there are some other remarkable points of resemblance. Each poem adds to the scripture narrative a reason for Jonah's refusal to perform his mission, though the reasons differ somewhat in the two poems. Both poems refer to Jonah as snoring loudly as he sleeps in the hold of the ship (A. 186, B. 54). Besides, in each poem the first question of the shipmaster is how Jonah can sleep in such straits (A. 191-192, B. 58-59). But it should be remarked that the English poet, instead of following the scripture narrative in other particulars as does the Latin writer, puts the suggestion of casting lots, more naturally, before the attempt to find Jonah in the hold of the ship. It is not strange, perhaps, that both poets should enlarge upon the biblical account of the whale, and there are in these enlargements some similarities of expression. None

are so important as those connected with the storm, but mention may be made of the description of the whale rising from the depths (A. 248, B. 83); the seizure of the prey as it leaves the ship (A. 251, B. 86-87); the whale sinking again to the depths (A. 253, B. 97); the unsavory odors in Jonah's craft (A. 274, B. 98), and Jonah's sailing along untouched by the waves without (A. 301-302, B. 99).

This latter likeness of the English to the Latin poem depends on a corrected reading of lines 299-302, which I trust will commend itself. Fortunately the new reading requires nothing more serious than cutting in two one word and repunctuating the lines. By the older reading the second word of line 301 is *assayled*, MnE. *assailed*, and the first half of this line has been connected with the preceding. I propose to read instead of *assayled* the two words *as sayled*, MnE. *as sailed*, and connect the first half of this line with what follows rather than with what precedes. The word *borne* in line 302 means "stream," as representing OE. *burna* or *burne*, and not "man," the rendering of Morris, as if for OE. *beorn*. *Borne* corresponds to the ordinary form of OE. *burna*, *burne*, in the so-called alliterative poems, OE. *beorn* on the other hand commonly appearing as *burne* or *bourne*. I suggest also that a comma be put after, rather than before, *hym wyth* in line 300, and a semicolon instead of the comma at the end of the line. The lines would then read :

For þat mote in his mawe mad hym, I trowe,
 þaȝ hit lyttel were hym wyth, to wamel at his hert;
 And as sayled þe segge, ay sykerly he herde
 þe bygge borne on his bak & bete on his sydes.

To resume, the parallelism between the poem formerly attributed to Tertullian and that of the Middle English poet is so complete in a number of significant particulars, that without doubt the latter knew the Latin poem, and that it suggested to him some things in *Patience*. This supposition is strengthened by the fact that there is, so far as I can find,

no intervening paraphrase of the book of Jonah—either in Old French or Old English for example—which could have furnished the details of the story peculiar to both these poems.

It is natural to inquire whether the works of Tertullian present any other possible connection with the writings of our English poet. An examination shows, at least, that Tertullian wrote a treatise *De Patientia*. This alone, however, could hardly be regarded as important, were it not that in the treatise “Of Patience” the beatitudes are introduced in a manner quite similar to that at the beginning of the poem *Patience*. Near the beginning of the latter are these lines praising the virtue celebrated by the poet :

For quo-so suffer cowþe syt, sele wolde folge;

 þen is better to abyde þe bur vmbestoundes,
 þen ay þrow forth my þro, þaȝ me bynk ylle.

The beatitudes are then quoted as exemplifying the rewards of patient endurance. With this may be compared a portion of Chapter XI in Tertullian’s treatise.

“Of that duty [patience] great is the reward—happiness, namely. For whom but the patient has the Lord called happy in saying, ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens?’ No one assuredly is ‘poor in spirit,’ except he be humble. Well, who is humble except he be patient? For no one can abase himself without patience, in the first instance, to bear the act of abasement. ‘Blessed,’ saith He, ‘are the weepers and mourners.’ Who, without patience, is tolerant of such unhappinesses? And so to such, ‘consolation’ and ‘laughter’ are promised. ‘Blessed are the gentle:’ under this term surely the impatient cannot possibly be classed. Again when he marks ‘the peacemakers’ with the same title of felicity, and names them ‘sons of God,’ pray have the impatient any affinity with ‘peace?’ Even a fool may perceive that. When however he says, ‘Rejoice and exult as often as they shall curse and persecute you, for very great is your reward in heaven,’ of

course it is not to the impatience of exultation that he makes that promise; because no one will 'exult' in adversities unless he have first learnt to condemn them; no one will condemn them unless he have learnt to practise patience."¹

No reference to Jonah occurs in the treatise *De Patientia*. But in Tertullian's treatise *De Modestia* is an allusion to the prophet which may explain what might not otherwise be clear to a modern reader—the reason why Jonah is used as an example of patience. Most of us would no doubt regard him as an example of disobedience bringing upon itself just retribution. But in Chapter X of the treatise mentioned above, Tertullian questions whether the prophet did not "well nigh perish for the sake of a profane city not yet possessed of a knowledge of God, and still sinning in ignorance;" "unless," he adds, "he suffered as a typical example of the Lord's passion, which was to redeem repenting heathen as well as others."² Such a statement as this may possibly have suggested the English poet's use of the Jonah story, or at least it may serve to explain that use.

It has not been thought worth while to mention especially that among the poems sometimes attributed to Tertullian are two others which might be thought to have some connection with our poet's works, one relating the creation and fall of man, and one the destruction of Sodom. Descriptions of both the fall of man and the destruction of Sodom are also included in *Clannesse*, but there seems to be no connection with the Latin poems except in name. Still Tertullian, like most of the early fathers, made much of what the English poet calls the "filth of the flesh;" so that if the latter used the *De Jona* in writing *Patience*, it may possibly be that he also received some hints from Tertullian for the poem called *Clannesse*. No stress, however, can be laid upon this point without the other.

It is unnecessary to advance any argument to prove that the poet of *Patience* may have known the works of Tertullian.

¹ *Ante-Nicene Christian Library*, "Tertullian," Vol. I, p. 223.

² *Ibid.*, III, p. 81; translation slightly revised.

The latter was one of the best known of the Latin fathers during the Middle Ages. For example, Chaucer refers to him so explicitly in the *Prologue* to the *Wife of Bath's Tale*, that Professor Lounsbury thinks we may reasonably conclude the poet had in mind one or more treatises with which he was personally acquainted. It is even much more probable from his works, that the poet of *Patience* knew the Church fathers.

In conclusion, let me refer to a comparison sometimes made between the descriptions of the storm at sea in *Patience* and those in the *Destruction of Troy*. The similarity was first noted by Morris in his edition of the *Alliterative Poems*. I have nothing now to do with his suggestion that *Destruction of Troy* was written by the author of *Patience*. But it may be said, in support of what has here been advanced, that while there is some resemblance between the latter poems, the likeness is by no means so close or so conclusive of imitation as that between the *De Jona* and *Patience*, to which attention is here called.

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